

March 14, 2022

Dear Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary:

My name is Laurel LaPorte-Grimes. I'm a resident of Manchester and an organizer with Uniting for a Safe Inclusive Community – Manchester (USIC). USIC is a grassroots organization consisting of diverse community members in the Manchester area. We advocate with community members impacted by systems of oppression for socially just policies at the local, state, and national levels.

I am writing today IN SUPPORT of:

- SB 387 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
- SB 392 AN ACT CONCERNING STATEMENTS MADE BY JUVENILES

I am also writing IN STRONG OPPOSITION to the following bills:

- SB 16 AN ACT ADDRESSING GUN VIOLENCE AND JUVENILE CRIME
- SB 365 AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORMS
- SB 386 AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF THE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY LAWS OF THIS STATE.
- SB 388 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEFENSE OF A PERSON OR A PERSON'S DWELLING, PLACE OF WORK OR MOTOR VEHICLE
- HB 5417 AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE JUSTICE AND SERVICES AND FIREARMS BACKGROUND CHECKS
- HB 5418 AN ACT REVISING JUVENILE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE STATUTES AND INSURANCE STATUTES CONCERNING THEFT OF A MOTOR VEHICLE

I am submitting written testimony in opposition to the bills I listed above because they are rooted in false claims that Connecticut is experiencing tremendously high rates of crime being committed by youth. This is simply not supported by data. This crime rhetoric is being used to cause fear and push for reforms that, in the end, will result in more Black and Brown youth, and low-income White youth, becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. This will not provide a solution for any issues related to crime in our state.

This issue is important to me because I treasure the lives of our children. I recognize especially that our Black and Brown children are not only dealing with the challenges of navigating their teenage years, which are always a challenge, but they are also doing so while navigating systems that were built to put them at a disadvantage and cause them harm, and are currently being maintained to do exactly that. The bills I am in opposition to are valuing the voices of property owners with means, many of whom are white, over the needs of our Black and Brown youth. These bills are allowing fear-mongering and privilege to drive our legislative process. This is an awful way to create legislation, an awful way to create community, and an awful way to support our youth.

I urge you to SUPPORT SB 387 and SB 392 with the recommendations submitted by the Connecticut Justice Alliance. And I further urge you to OPPOSE bills SB 16, SB 365, SB 386, SB 388, HB 5417, and HB 5418.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Laurel LaPorte-Grimes, PhD  
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